

A Man for the Ages

A Story of the Builders of Democracy

By Irving Bacheller

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CHAPTER XVIII—Continued.

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They saddled their horses and mounted and rode up to the door. After their acknowledgments and farewells Brimstead came close to Samson and said in confidence: "I enjoy being a millionaire for a few minutes now and then. It's as good as going to a circus and cheaper."

"The feelings of a millionaire are almost as good as the money while they last," said Abe Lincoln with a laugh.

At early candlelight they reached the sycamore woods very hungry. It was a beautiful grovelike forest on the shore of a stream. The crossing was a rough bridge of corduroy. A crude log tavern and a crudely store stood on the farther shore of the creek. The tavern was a dirty place with a drunken proprietor. Three ragged, shiftless farmers and a half-breed Indian sat in its main room in varying stages of inebriety. A well-dressed, handsome young man with a diamond in his shirt-front was leading a horse back and forth in the stable yard. The diamond led Samson to suspect that he was the man Davis of whom Mrs. Brimstead had spoken. Our travelers, not liking the look of the place, got some oats and rode on, camping near the farther edge of the woods, where they built a fire, fed and tethered their horses and sat down and ate from the store in their saddlebags.

Then with their knives Abe and Samson cut big armfuls of grass from the near prairie for the horses and a bed upon which the three men lay down for the night.

Samson had that gift of "sleeping with one eye open" which the perils of the wilderness had conferred upon the pioneer. He had lain down on the side of their bed near the horses, which were tethered to trees only a few feet away. He had gone to sleep with his pistol under his right hand. Late in the night he was awakened by an unusual movement among the horses. In the dim light of the fire he could see a man in the act of bridling Abe's horse.

"Hold up your hands," Samson shouted as he covered the man with his pistol. "If ye stir a foot I'll bore a hole in ye."

The man threw up his hands and stood still.

In half a moment Abe Lincoln and Harry had got up and captured the man and the loosed horse.

This is part of the entry which Samson made in his diary a week or so later:

"Harry put some wood on the fire while Abe and I led him up into the light. He was one of the dirty white men we had seen at the tavern."

"I'll give you four hundred dollars for a horse in good Michigan money," he said.

"If ye can't steal a horse ye're willin' to buy one," I says.

"No, sir. I only come to buy," says he.

"I flopped him sudden and asked him why he was putting on the bridle. He owned up then. Said a man had hired him to steal the horse."

"That man has got to have a horse," he said. "He'll give ye any price ye want to ask. If ye'll give me a few dollars I'll take ye to him."

"Ye go and bring him here and I'll talk to him," I said.

"I let the feller go. I didn't suppose he'd come back, but he did. Came a little before sunrise with that well-dressed feller we saw at the tavern."

"What's your name?" I says.

"He handed me a card on which I read the words Lionel Davis, Real Estate, Loans and Insurance, 14 South Water Street, Chicago, Ill."

"There's one branch o' your business that isn't mentioned on the card," I says.

"What's that?" says he.

"Horse-thief," says I. "Ye sent that feller here to steal a horse and he got caught."

"Well I told him if he'd get me a good horse I'd give him five hundred dollars and that I didn't care how he got him. The fact is I'm desperate. I'll give you a thousand dollars for one of your horses."

"Ye couldn't buy one of 'em at any price," I said. "There's two reasons. I wouldn't do business with a horse-thief and no money would tempt me to sell an animal to be ridden to death."

"The two thieves had had enough of us and they got out."

That night our party camped on the shore of the Kankakee and next day they met the contractors. Lincoln joined the latter party and Harry and Samson went on alone. Late that afternoon they crossed the nine-mile prairie, beyond which they could see the shimmer of the lake and the sunlit structures of the new city.

"There it is," said Samson. "Four thousand, one hundred and eighty people live there. It looks like a sturdy two-year-old."

The houses were small and cheaply built and of many colors. Some were unpainted. Near the prairie they stood like people on the outer edge of a crowd, looking over one another's shoulders and pushing in a disordered mass toward the center of interest. Some seemed to have struggled away as if they had given up trying to see or hear. So to one nearing it the town had a belter-skelter look.

Our travelers passed rough boarded houses with grand-looking people in their dooryards and on their small porches—men in broadcloth and tall hats and ladies in silk dresses. It was six o'clock and the men had come home to supper. As the horsemen proceeded larger buildings surrounded them, mostly two stories high. There were some stores and houses built of red brick. Beyond the scatter of cheap, wooden structures they came to streets well laid out and crowded and busy and "very soft" to quote a phrase from the diary. Teams were struggling in the mud, drivers shouting and lashing. Agents for hotels and boarding houses began to solicit the two horsemen from the plank sidewalks. The latter were deeply impressed by a negro in scarlet clothes, riding a horse in scarlet housings. He carried a scarlet banner and was advertising in a loud voice the hour and place of a great land sale that evening.

A sound of many hammers beating upon boards could be heard above the noises of the street and behind all was the constant droning of a big steam saw and the whir of the heavy stones in the new grist mill. It was the beginning of that amazing diapason of industry which accompanied the building of the cities of the West.

They put out in the livery stable of the City hotel and at the desk of the latter asked about the price of board. It was three dollars a day and no politeness in the offer.

"It's purty steep," said Samson. "But I'm too hungry for argument or delay and I guess we can stand it to be nabobs for a day or so."

The hotel clerk had a Register of the Residents of the City of Chicago wherein they found the name and address of John Kelso. They went out to find the house. Storekeepers tried to stop them as they passed along the street with offers of land at bargains which would make them millionaires in a week. In proceeding along the plank sidewalks they were often ascending or descending steps to another level.

On La Salle street they found the home of Jack Kelso. It was a rough boarded small house, a story and a half high. It had a little porch and dooryard enclosed by an unpainted



"Hold Up Your Hands," Samson Shouted.

picket fence. Bim, in a handsome, blue silk gown, came running out to meet them.

"If you don't mind I'm going to kiss you," she said to Harry.

"I'd mind if you didn't," said the young man as he embraced her.

"We must be careful not to get the habit," she laughed.

"I'd enjoy being careless for once," said Harry.

"Women can be extravagant with everything but carelessness," she insisted. "Do you like this gown?"

"It is lovely—like yourself."

"Then perhaps you will be willing to take me to the party tonight. My mother will chaperon us."

"With these clothes that have just been hauled out of a saddle bag?" said Harry with a look of alarm.

"Even rags could not hide the beauty of him," said Kelso as he came down from the porch to greet them. "And look at her," he went on. "Was there ever a fairer maid in spite of all her troubles? See the red in her cheeks and the diamond glow of youth and health in her eyes. You should see the young men sighing and guttaring around her."

"You'll hear me tuning up," Harry declared.

"That is father's way of comforting my widowhood," said Bim. "He has made a wonderful beauty mask and often he claps it on me and whistles up a band of sighing lovers. As a work of the imagination I am a great success."

"The look of you sets my heart afire again," the boy exclaimed.

"Come—take mother and me to the party at Mrs. Kinzie's," said Bim. "A very grand young man was coming to take us in a wonderful carriage, but he's half an hour late now. We won't wait for him."

So the three set out together afoot for Mrs. Kinzie's, while Samson sat down for a visit with Jack Kelso.

The Kinzie's house was of brick and larger and more pretentious than any in Chicago. Its lawn, veranda and parlor were crowded with people in a curious variety of costumes.

Nearly all the festive company wore diamonds. They scintillated on fingers, some of which were knotted with toll; they glowed on shirt bosoms and morning as well as evening gowns; on necks and ears, which should have been spared the emphasis of jewels.

Col. Zachary Taylor, who had just arrived from Florida and was presently returning with a regiment of recruits for the Seminole war, was at Mrs. Kinzie's party. He remembered Harry and took him in hand and introduced him to many of his friends as the best scout in the Black Hawk war, and, in spite of his dress, the young man became one of the lions of the evening.

After refreshments the men went outside to smoke and talk—some with pipes—of canals, railroads and corner lots, while the younger people were dancing and being proudly surveyed by their mothers.

As Harry and the ladies were leaving Col. Taylor came to them and said:

"Young man, I am the voice of your country. I call you to Florida. Will you go with us next week?"

Harry looked into Bim's eyes.

"The campaign will be over in a year, and I need you badly," the Colonel urged.

"I can not say no to the call of my country," Harry answered. "I will join your regiment at Beardstown on its way down the river."

That night Harry and Bim stood by the gate talking, after Mrs. Kelso had gone into the house.

"Bim, I love you more than ever," said the boy. "Abe says you can get a divorce. I have brought the papers for you to sign. They will make you free. I have done it for your sake. You will be under no obligation. I want you to be free to marry whom you will. I would be the happiest man in the world if you were to choose me. I haven't the wealth of some of the city men. I can only offer you my love."

"Be careful and, please, let go of my hand," she said. "I'm not going to say a word of love to you. I am not free yet. We couldn't marry if we wanted to. I wish you to be under no sense of obligation to me. Many things may happen in a year. I am glad you are going to see more of the world before you settle down. It will help you to be sure to know yourself a little better and to be sure of what you want to do."

"I think that I know myself fairly well," he answered. "There are so many better men who want to marry you! I shall go away with a great fear in me."

"There are no better men," she answered. "When you get back we shall see what comes of our little romance. Meanwhile I'm going to pray for you."

"And I for you," he said as he followed her into the house, where the older people sat waiting for them. Harry gave the papers to Bim to be signed and attested and forwarded to Mr. Stuart in Springfield.

On their way to the hotel Samson said to Harry:

"I don't believe Bim is going to be carried away by any of these high-flyers. She's getting to be a very sensible person. Poor Jack has caught the plague. He has invested in land. Thinks it will make him rich. He's in poor health, too—kidney trouble—and Bim has a baby with all the rest—a beautiful boy. I went upstairs and saw him asleep in his cradle. Looks like her. Hair as yellow as gold, light complexion, blue eyes, handsome as a picture."

That night, in the office of the City hotel, they found Mr. Lionel Davis in

the midst of a group of excited spectators. In some way he had got across the prairies and was selling his land and accepting every offer on the plea that he was going into the grain business in St. Louis and had to leave Chicago next day. He choked the market with bargains. The buyers began to back off. Mr. Davis closed his carpet bag and left.

"It was a kind of horse stealin'," said Samson as they were going to



Harry Looked Into Bim's Eyes.

bed. "He got news down there on the main road by pony express on its way to St. Louis. I'll bet there's been a panic in the East. He's awake and the others are still dreamin'."

CHAPTER XIX.

Wherein Is One of the Many Private Panics Which Followed the Bursting of the Bubble of Speculation.

Samson and Harry saw the bursting of the great bubble of '37. Late that night, Disaster, loathsome and thousand-legged, crept into the little city. It came on a steamer from the East and hastened from home to home, from tavern to tavern. Great banks had suspended payment; New York had suffered a panic; many large business enterprises in the East had failed; certain agents for the bonds of Illinois had absconded with the state's money; in the big cities there had been an ominous closing of doors and turning of locks; a great army of men were out of employment. The little city was in a frenzy of excitement. The streets were filled with a shouting, half-crazed throng. New fortunes had shrunk to nothing and less than nothing in a night. Lots in the city were offered for a tithe of what their market value had been. Davis had known that the storm would arrive with the first steamer and in the slang of business had put on a life-preserver. Samson knew that the time to buy was when every one wanted to sell. He bought two corner lots in the city and two acres on the prairie half a mile from town. They got their deeds and went to the Kelso's to bid them good-by.

After hearty farewells Samson and Harry set out for their home. They were not again to see the gentle face and hear the pleasant talk of Jack Kelso. He had once said, in the presence of Samson, that it is well to remember, always, that things can not go on with us as they are. Changes come—slowly and quite according to our calculations, or so swiftly and unexpectedly that they fill us with confusion. Learned and wise in the weighty problems of humanity he had little prudence in regulating the affairs of his own family.

Kelso had put every dollar he had and some that he hoped to have into land. Bim, who had been teaching in one of the schools, had invested all her savings in a dream city on the shore of an unconstructed canal.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Gloving the Tongue.

A glove for the tongue has been patented by an inventor of Indiana. It is called a "tongue shield," and is designed to enable the wearer to escape the unpleasantness of castor oil or other bad-tasting medicines. The contrivance might be said to have the shape of a miniature slipper without any heel portion, but when placed over the tongue is inverted. The tongue is inserted into the "toe" part and the back part of the "sole" extends over the top of the tongue toward the throat. The device is made of thin rubber, so as to be liquid proof, and is so constructed as to fit the tongue snugly without discomfort. When medicine is taken it passes into the throat without affecting the sense of taste, so that all unpleasantness is obviated.

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FRECKLES

Concerning the Poppy.

To the farmer the poppy is an unloved weed. In the old days, however, the flower was held in great esteem, being dedicated to Ceres, the goddess of agriculture. It played an important part in harvest-home celebrations and other ceremonies, and was protected in the countryside. Today, in Switzerland, the poppy is used as a love token. Girls place a petal in the palm of their left hand and strike it with their right. If the petal bursts with a sharp "pop" the lover in the case is held to be sincere. If there is no sound the girl believes him false.

Lost.

Stella—Did she lose her heart? Bella—Yes, she wants it returned with one question asked.

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